



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Crash Reduction Efforts Announced

In 2017 Dodge County has experienced a significant spike in traffic crash deaths. From 2011-2015 there were on average 10.6 deaths per year due to traffic crashes. In 2016 that number went up to 12 and through early November 2017, 18 people have lost their lives on Dodge County roadways. This number does not come close to measuring the harm caused by traffic crashes. According to the Bureau of Transportation, the average economic impact of crashes in Dodge County alone for the years 2011-2014 is **\$95,514,564** per year (includes medical costs, estimated other costs and quality of life). The average loss of life was **332.6** years.

The Dodge County Sheriff's Office, as part of its efforts to always be seeking public value in everything we do, has adopted a problem solving philosophy, often referred to as problem oriented policing. The main premise behind a problem solving approach is to go beyond the surface of problems to try to identify the root cause. By doing so, we are able to prevent the problem from reoccurring or at least reduce the likelihood. This in turn creates public value in that it reduces the harm to the public going forward.

The Dodge County Sheriff's Office has been working on a comprehensive, long term problem solving effort to improve the safety of all travelers on Dodge County roads. This approach is one that will be data-driven, based on the most recent research in effective deployment tactics and collaborative with the public and other stakeholders. We feel that based on the research and through continued problem solving efforts we could reasonably set a goal of a 25-50% reduction in fatal crashes in 2018 over the 2017 total. However, we cannot do it alone.

According to the Bureau of Transportation's Anatomy of Traffic Safety – in Dodge County, the four leading driver contributing factors in crashes from 2011-2014 were inattentive driving, failure to have control, too fast for conditions and failure to yield right of way. Furthermore, of the fatal crashes during that timeframe, 41.5% were alcohol or drug related, 20.8% were speed related and 26.4% were inattentive driving related.

When considering the rural nature of Dodge County, many crashes that occur are at highway speeds, therefore speed is a factor in most crashes. Now consider the facts regarding the physics of a crash. The average human reaction time is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a second, not taking into account being tired, impaired or distracted. During that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a second your vehicle travels 1.1 feet for every one mile per hour you are traveling. Therefore a vehicle traveling 55 mph travels 60.5' during that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a second whereas a vehicle traveling 65 mph will go 71.5'. That is a difference of 11'! That can mean the difference between a near miss and a crash; between a fatality and minor injury.

Now add to the mix that if you double the speed of a vehicle you don't just double the stopping distance, it increases **FOUR FOLD!** The same is true for momentum. That means there is four times more damage and you hit objects four times harder. It is for these reasons that crashes in rural areas like ours often result in serious consequences. High speeds greatly increase the likelihood of a fatality.

In our efforts to save lives and reduce the harm of these crashes, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office will be conducting increased enforcement efforts, especially in our highest crash areas. We will be focusing on speed enforcement as well as other aggressive driving such as unsafe passing and stop sign violations. We will continue our efforts towards the detection and arrest of those who choose to drive impaired. We will be using various forms of technology, signs and different deployment tactics. As part of our ongoing problem solving effort, we will be modifying our tactics as needed to be as efficient and effective as possible with the resources we have. We will be using a variety of squads, both marked and unmarked and we will be coordinating our efforts with other law enforcement agencies to maximize our effectiveness.

It is important that drivers understand that speed tolerances that may have been perceived in the past, do not exist. If drivers are traveling aggressively or in excess of the speed limit, they should expect to be stopped. Those who have found it acceptable to roll through stop signs in the past may find a squad car stopping them in the future. Also, please remember that it is not our goal to increase the amount of traffic stops or citations that are being issued but rather have compliance of the law from all drivers so that we are not forced into taking action. This needs to be a collaborative effort between law enforcement and the community. We are asking all members of the public to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. *"Most people admit they speed at least some of the time...do not believe they are driving unsafely when they speed. At the same time, most people feel threatened by the speeding of others and want something to be done to reduce the speeding of others and improve driving safety."* (Countermeasures that Work: A Highway Safety Countermeasure Guide For State Highway Safety Offices Sixth Edition, 2011)

Remember, you may be a safe driver but you can't predict what other drivers will do. Therefore we ask all residents and visitors to **make a conscious choice** to:

- Drive the speed limit
- Don't drive impaired
- Don't allow yourself to drive distracted
- Stop completely at all stop signs and signals
- Share this information with family and friends and encourage them to do the same

The official kickoff will take place on **Wednesday, November 22, 2017**, the busiest travel day of the year. We encourage all to drive safely and enjoy their Thanksgiving without forcing a traffic stop or worse, a tragedy on our highways.

*Sheriff Dale Schmidt wants everyone to play a part in keeping Dodge County a safe place to live, work and play and to make it home safely to their families every night.*

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